



Elk

Cervus elaphus

-Elk are large hoofed mammals that can weigh more than 1,000 pounds.

-Elk migrate through Bandelier from the higher elevations in the summer to lower elevations in the winter.

-Elk were eliminated from the area by the early 1900's but were reintroduced in the 1960's.



-Elk populations in the immediate area are quite high. Archeological data indicates populations were probably significantly lower in the past.

-Elk are heavy browsers and have a large impact on the landscape. Unlike deer that are opportunistic browsers, elk will consume a favorite food (aspen, choke cherry, oak) until there is no more left. They will then eat their second favorite food until it is also gone, followed by their third, and so on. Heavy elk browsing can significantly reduce plant diversity in an area.

-Elk males (bulls) sport a large set of antlers in the fall which they use to attract mates and to ward off

other male competition. They also issue a loud bugling cry that is a warning to other males and an invitation to females.

-Mountain lions are the only wild predator found in the park that would be likely to take down a healthy adult elk. Black bear and coyote may prey on the young, elderly, or sick.

